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Letter dated 21 February 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Algeria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

With a view to the consideration by the Security Council, at the end of this month, of the question of Western Sahara and the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and following the issue of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the question of Western Sahara, I should like to share with you, on behalf of Algeria, an observer State to the process of implementation of the Settlement Plan, the following comments:

1. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1324 (2000) of 30 October 2000, the two parties, "under the auspices of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, will continue to try to resolve the multiple problems relating to the implementation of the Settlement Plan and try to agree upon a mutually acceptable political solution to their dispute over Western Sahara".

Consequently, the United Nations, which has a duty to make efforts in the two directions specified by the Security Council, may under no circumstances give preference to one alternative over the other, much less favour the quest for "a mutually acceptable political solution" over the implementation of the Settlement Plan and the Houston Accords, which have the unanimous support of the international community.

2. In his report on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2000/1029) of 25 October 2000, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that if the progress he and his Personal Envoy hoped to make in their quest for a "mutually acceptable political solution" had not materialized during the next extension of the mandate of MINURSO, the Mission "should begin hearing the pending appeals from the identification process on an expedited basis, without regard as to how long it might be expected to take to complete them" (para. 31).

Since the Secretary-General's most recent report, which has just been submitted to the Security Council, apparently does not reveal any such progress, MINURSO should logically begin an immediate hearing of the pending appeals from the identification process, thereby resuming the implementation of the Settlement Plan that was accepted on 30 August 1988 by the two parties and approved by the Security Council through its resolutions 658 (1990) and 690 (1991) of 27 June 1990 and 29 April 1991, respectively, as being the only framework for a just and lasting solution to the dispute.

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The international community has all the more right to expect the United Nations to act promptly to implement the Settlement Plan in view of the General Assembly's further reiteration of the full validity of the Plan at its fifty-fifth session and the fact that the Security Council has constantly expressed — most recently in its resolution 1324 (2000) of 30 October 2000 — its full support for the continued efforts exerted by MINURSO to implement the Settlement Plan and agreements adopted by the parties.

3. Algeria believes that the question of the appeals — whose hearing modalities were agreed by the two parties in the identification and appeals protocols concluded in May 1999 in New York under United Nations auspices, and which represent the last obstacle before the commencement of the interim period leading up to the referendum — should and can be settled if the United Nations decides to take a firm stand and mobilize the necessary human and financial resources.

Algeria believes that, if it is conducted quickly, effectively and rigorously, the appeals process can be carried out within a reasonable period of time. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat should be able to provide prompt, useful and precise guidelines on the duration of this process.

4. My country, which has never stinted in its support for the Secretary-General of the United Nations, his Personal Envoy or his Special Representative in their efforts towards the implementation of the Settlement Plan and the holding of a free, fair and impartial referendum, with a view to the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, would like to reiterate its belief that there is no other just and lasting way to settle the question of Western Sahara than the one based on international law, that is, on the free expression by the Saharan people of their inalienable right to self-determination.

5. Algeria, which attaches the greatest importance to the full collaboration of the two parties with the Secretary-General, his Personal Envoy and his Personal Representative, urges them to continue such collaboration in order to implement the various phases of the Settlement Plan with a view to the holding of the long-awaited referendum as soon as possible.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah **Balli**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative